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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
PEDAGOGUE AND POACHER

By the same author.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
PEDAGOGUE & POACHER
A DRAMA BY RICHARD GARNETT

I have an excellent intellect to go steal some venison.
— The Merry Devil of Edmonton
It is an honourable kind of thievery.
— Two Gentlemen of Verona

JOHN LANE · THE BODLEY HEAD
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Shakespeare understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country.— Aubrey.

He was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits, particularly from Sir Thomas Lucy, who had him oft whipt, and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native county to his great advancement.— Archdeacon Davies.

He combined his information, Sir.— The Editor of the Eatanswill Gazette.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Sir Thomas Lucy, *Knight and Euphuist.*

Lady Lucy.

William Shakespeare.

Ann Shakespeare.

The Earl of Leicester.

Moles, *Forester and Ratcatcher.*

Six Scholars.

Five Fathers and a Mother.

The Clerk of the Court.

The Constable.

Attendants and Ushers.

Foresters.

Diana, *Spirit of the Moon.*

Scene, Stratford-on-Avon and its neighbourhood. Time, March, 1585.

N. B. — The comedy here attributed to Shakespeare is not his "Taming of *the* Shrew," but the old piece entitled "The Taming of *a* Shrew," upon which his own play was founded, and which some have believed to have been written by him.

ACT I

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
PEDAGOGUE AND POACHER

SCENE I. — SIR THOMAS LUCY'S *parlour at Charlcote.* SIR THOMAS *seated in an elbow chair, turned somewhat aside from the head of the table.* LADY LUCY *seated near him.* MOLES *standing near the door.*

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

The bended back beseems the baser birth
In presence of the great ones of the earth.
Incurve thy chine with meet humility,
Then in a standing posture list to me.

MOLES [*bowing awkwardly*].

Aye, aye, Sir Thomas.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Know, rude forester,
There 's something rotten in the state of Charlcote.

Sound stands the mansion still, 't is true, with roof
Impervious to the beams and rains of heaven,
Nor yet bereft of soaring pinnacle,
Or portalled lodge, or zone of stately trees;
The thicket blooms and fruits; nor hath the plough
Profaned or daisied mead or lawny dell.
But where the sylvan people? Where the troops
Of stag and doe and delicate fawn that erst
Did gambol in these groves? And, consequently,
Where be the haunch and pasty? Smoked these still
Upon the board 't were somewhat, but the board
Is emptier than the forest avenue,
Where still a remnant lingers, which dislodged,
All should be dire depopulation.
Whence, in the name of Zernebock, this nuisance!

[*Rises and approaches* MOLES.

Storms the Wild Huntsman with his swarthy pack
Along my woodland alleys? Do the hounds
That erst with horrid fangs Actæon tore
Seek in these shades a quadrupedal prey?

Say, doth the broom-bestriding sorceress,
Companioned with foul incubi, entwine
Her skinny arms round the reluctant deer,
And drag it to her Sabbath and her Satan?
Or twangs the bow and speeds the silver shaft
Of the Queen-Huntress? Hast thou e'er beheld
A covert-breaking stag impetuous
Burst from the brake and scour adown the glade,
Followed by a giant's shadow with a spear?

[MOLES *scratches his head.*

LADY LUCY.

Truly, Sir Thomas, you have dazed the man,
Crushing with flowery opulence of phrase
His weak intelligence, as she of Naxos
Perished 'neath garlands heaped to honour her.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Have I then, aiming at a lowly mark,
Despatched my arrow toward the skies? Yet, rustic,
Haply thou deem'st the gold of my discourse

By thee with diamond should be repaid:
O no! the pebble shall serve well enough.
As well array thy cap with plumes, and change
Jerkin for doublet in thy master's presence.
Rack not thy brain for tropes rhetorical,
Such do but misbecome the borrel man
Who ne'er hath learned moral philosophy,
Or the division of a battle known
More than a spinster. Yet, who wotteth not
Of some forgotten nook, some cornered cranny,
Some entrance to huge learning's labyrinth,
Where even I, our Stratford's Pittacus,
Must grope without his eyes? Thy special sphere
Is vermin, as avoucheth my barn-door,
With hawk and stoat thick tapestried by thee.
I hold thee then well seen in venery,
And in the lore of woodcraft perfected,
And now, my keeper mad, our constable
By many much suspected for a Papist,
Do seek thy oracle, as erst was sought

Dodona's oak, or Libyan Ammon's shrine.
If aught of spark celestial glow in thee,
Puff it to flame, be by contráry office
This trouble's candle and extinguisher.
What bane our board of venison bereaves?

MOLES.

Sir Thomas, I be thinking it be thieves.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Rehearse the villains' appellations.

MOLES.

There is but one, his name is Everybody.
Each pounces on whatever he can find,
Wood, wheat, wool, poultry, hare and hart and hind.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Yet must thou their iniquity bewray,
And shine the Phosphor of their reckoning day:
If frank, thy tongue my treasury unlocks:
If stockish, steel thy legs against the stocks.

MOLES.

In sooth they are a goodly company!
There 's Hugh the broken soldier; fiddling Jerry;
Jim the attorney's clerk, and Tim the parson's;
Lawrence who stole my sweetheart; Bill the crier;
John Combe, these ten years earmarked by the devil;
Old Grey the horses' leech; Sorrel the huntsman;
Ben Brock, the county's champion badger-skinner;
That madcap tinker, sly Christophero
(Bearwarden was his post till self-adjudged
Unmeet to carry entrails to a bear,
Uncertain if through pride or modesty);
Black Will and Shakebag; Much the miller's son;
Madge, the hoar witch who fosters ten tom-cats;
All ratcatchers save me, your loyal slave;
The charcoal-burners all, and all the beggars.

LADY LUCY.

Consider, Moles, consider, sums this all
The spotted snakes thou did'st divulge to me?

MOLES.

No, murkiest ink in all the register
Writes the black name of Shakespeare, schoolmaster.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Iniquity! hast thou more mysteries?
Shakespeare! the man aye wears a smiling face.

LADY LUCY.

A man may smile, and smile, and be a villain.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Aye, but I deemed his evil genius
Spirit of other sort, and him the man
To caper idly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
Clear is his brow, open his countenance,
Lively the sparkle of his hazel eye,
Liquid his speech, nor doth the woodland bird
Prolong a sweeter melody than he
When virginal or lute enraptures him.

MOLES.

I know the lad, he always be sweethearting,
Yet follows he on foot the chasing pack
To the death, no match at coursing willingly
Misses, or tussle of the hawk and hern.
And though he be a main soft-hearted fellow,
You shall not stay him from a bear-baiting.

LADY LUCY.

Yet have I seen him stride with hasty steps,
Stopped on the sudden; heard him mouth anon
Sonorous resonance of syllables,
With arms flung widely forth; then roaring mirth
At some unspoken jest's hilarity;
Then drooping sad eyes toward the sod, as though
Summing its blades: or, stretched 'neath some great tree,
Poring upon the brook that babbled by.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

You paint one lunatic for love, or else
An actor, the sick kingdom's boil and blain.

We want none such; wherefore departs he not
To seek a madhouse or a theatre?

LADY LUCY.

He hath for theatre his own abode,
Where daily he enacteth tragedy.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

I partly do conceive thee, for I know him
A fellow almost damned in a fair wife.

LADY LUCY.

Fair! I have known the day thy taste was better;
A faded creature infelicitous!
Nimble and strenuous of tongue, I grant;
Rueing her lot and cursed in her conditions;
Moth, acid, rust to all that others joy in;
A withered apple, only good to pelt with.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Malo me Galatea petit, lasciva puella.
Lady, this blast that storms against the wife
Argues the husband high in your esteem.

LADY LUCY.

Even as a ruby bartered for a bead
Rateth its idiot lord, rate I Will Shakespeare.
But soft, what am I saying?

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

What, alack!
Well, well, I will not doubt all 's honesty.
Yet somewhat doth it stir my noble stomach
To mark you thus concerned about a vassal.

LADY LUCY.

Merely as one may watch a struggling fly
Drowning in clammy milk, or muddy beer,
Scarce caring if he scapes or perishes,
Yet indolently sorry for his plight,
And, haply, scornful of aerial wings
Soused in a stuff so gross.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

If this be all,
Wherefore so fiery-hot against the woman?

LADY LUCY.

The virtuous lady much abhorreth vice,
Abhors the vicious more, and most detests
The leman crept into the matron's place.
What! would she eat her cake and have it too?
Infringe the rules, and yet be free of the guild?
Cannot she be one thing or else the other?
If Anna were no worse than a light woman,
Despised she were, but not abominated;
But being what she is, is child of wrath.
I see thou know'st not her enormities.
This mirror of the maidenhood of Stratford,
This wan ungathered rose, this vestal ogress,
Sets cap and trap for Shakespeare, he is caught,
And frequent seeks her cot past toll of curfew.
There rapture reigns, till, one autumnal even,
Sudden the chamber swarms with angry brothers,
And cousins in a most excited state.
Poor Shakespeare hangs his head, a manifest villain,
And creeps like snail unwillingly to church,

Wishing his godsire in his infancy
Had brought him to the gallows, not the font.
And ill continues what was ill begun.
The crab upon the peach so crossly grafted
Grows none the sweeter, and the course of wedlock
Runneth no smoother than the course of love.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

No wonder, then, he hunts in others' houses
For kinder and more charitable spouses.
I do remember once to have forbid
The knave this mansion, nor was my decree
Devoid of reference to your ladyship,
Whom truly I esteemed the more in fault.

LADY LUCY.

O good Sir Thomas, haughty is your carriage,
But condescending is your jealousy,
Which stoops to pry and spy and peer, and sniffs
Scent of a wooing temerarious
If one but speaks to an inferior:

Nor, by reverse of error, takes account
Of that amazing altitude whereto
Your greatness beckoned my humility.
Love squanders not his arrows in star-shooting.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

But certain stars shoot madly from their spheres,
And, fallen to earth, each fair and radiant flame
Is turned to jellied slime. Mark, in this matter
Sir Thomas Lucy thinks with Julius Cæsar.

LADY LUCY.

Sir Thomas, striving to dispel the fume,
Misgives me I shall but incense the fire,
Yet hear me say, could I be moved for Shakespeare,
Cause had I ample both for tears and laughter,
Seeing a man (thou knowest him not as I do)
Whose future to his present lot might be
As all the woods of Arden to an acorn;
Whose growing soul outstrips to-day's condition
And leaves each yesterday a league behind it;

Who with a wand of might can summon up
Dead majesties and miracles of women,
Who, but for him, mortality should not
Imagine to itself, much less behold; —
To see this eagle, winged with might to make him
Lord of the air and neighbour of the Sun,
Penned among geese, and plucked by Anna Shakespeare,
Should not cats laugh and angels weep, and I,
Supposing me, as thy mistrust would paint me,
His scorned deserted love, should I not shout,
And sob with very ecstasy of vengeance?

[*Sobs and rushes from the room.*

Sir Thomas Lucy [*shouting after her*].

Thou dost! Enough, and far too much, my lady!

Moles.

O honoured master, why this passion?
Be certain of thy lady's innocence.
'T was at her bidding I denounced Will Shakespeare.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

A fine proof this! O desperate revenge!
The man is slandered, then, and thou suborned?
O poison thrice distilled!

MOLES.

Not so, Sir Thomas.
I do most Christianly believe he poaches,
But would not take my Bible oath upon it.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

This must and shall be sifted. What of the night?

MOLES.

What would your honour? it is broad noon-day.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

What of the night? I say.

MOLES.

Your honour's meaning?

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Last night the tallest trees were swathed in mist
Even to their naked tops, and chilly dews

Soddened the last year's tattered foliage
That long ago has rustled to the earth.
But overhead the moon, though dim and wearing
Kirtle of green, and traversed oft by clouds,
Yet gave a light malign, for him most apt
Who fain would see, yet fain would not be seen.
A poacher's night.

MOLES.

Ah, now I take your honour.
To-night will be the image of the last.
If Shakespeare must be poaching, now 's his time.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Go seek the cot where this boy-pedagogue
Perverts, I gravely fear, the youthful mind,
And, passing, chance to look in casually,
And fall by accident into discourse,
And hint how Hercules on such a night
Surprised the flying stag Arcadian;

Then with a band of faithful foresters
Patrol the woodland glades.

MOLES.

Aye, aye, Sir Thomas.

[*Exit.*

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

This cannot fail, for if he scape espial
'T will evidence his most malicious craft
To satisfaction both of judge and jury,
Namely myself, who in my proper person
Combine those venerable characters,
Adding thereto the plaintiff's. Equally
I 'll to the grindstone bring the villain's nose,
If he of horns bereaves, or horns bestows.

[*Exit.*

Re-enter LADY LUCY.

I 've heard, 't is well, 't is best, my plot hath prospered.
Repent I now? or not? O mind of woman!
I knew the youth a prodigy, whose fame
Might fill the world, could he but have release
From sordid straits, and fields to show his mettle.

And yet I played with him, and kept him here
Adscriptus glebae, as Sir Thomas saith,
And warped and marred his destiny, till Pride,
Piercing the heart Love found impregnable,
Did unintended passage make for Love.
'T was Ann, not William, first did move my passion.
O stinging shame ! O scoff insufferable !
O Lady Lucy, thou dost jeopardise
Thy eminence and station matronly.
Thy husband (such as Heaven was pleased to make
him
In wit and parts, but meaning well by thee)
To slur, and blight the fortune of thy children,
Not at thy lover's bidding, but thy foe's !
Speed, ministering Moles, thou man of rats,
And pluck thy mistress from the pit of peril ;
Then Master Shakespeare shall avoid the shire,
And Mistress Shakespeare come upon the parish.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *Interior of Shakespeare's School. Shakespeare and Six Scholars.*

FIRST SCHOLAR.

O master, lay we now these books aside,
And listen cheerly to a tale of hunting.

SHAKESPEARE.

'T was not for this your parents sent you here.

FIRST SCHOLAR

Beshrew our parents, speak to us of foxes.

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Or hares.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Or harts.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Or hawks.

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Or hounds.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

Or horses.

SHAKESPEARE.

Scholars, I doubt not you will bear me witness
I have not plagued you overmuch with study,
Addled your hatching brains in any fashion,
Disfigured your young flesh with rod and ferule,
Drilled you to grave and reverent deportment,
Or done, as most would deem, my duty by you.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

The gods forbid! You evermore have been
Our very noble and approved good master,
For whom the eloquent divinity
Untwines the serpents from his golden rod,
And Pallas stills the hooting of her owl.
Unsanguined hangs the birch where first I saw it,
Nor have I known it taken down, unless
To whip a stray dog forth. What *is* a ferule?

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Rather your gentleness by genial lures
Did woo our wayward wills, according us

Practise of liberal arts. Myself have learned
To make gunpowder.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

I have skill in fencing.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

I know a score of tricks upon the cards.

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

I can a kettle mend.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

I cook a hedgehog.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

But most do we applaud the vast reform
Made in our classical curriculum.
Your worship liketh Master Ovid well,
Yet have not thrust his Latin down our throats,
But given us the pith of him in English.

SECOND SCHOLAR.

And how the hours have flown in listening tales
Of dwarfs and giants, magic swords and rings,

Paladins, princely captives, mermaids, ghosts
Freighted with airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Saracens, dragons, necromancers, fairies
That on the beached margent of the sea
Do dance their ringlets to the whistling wind!

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Aye, and that huge old volume in the window,
What tales thou drewest from its tattered page!
Reading to our rapt silence histories
Of steeled and steeded war, of ruth and ruin,
Grief of high dames, and dooms of kings and princes,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed,
Or massacred in rage of mutiny.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

You eke have mightily endeared yourself
By wondrous feats at leapfrog.

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Blindman's buff.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

By raisins, almonds, ginger, sugarplums.

SHAKESPEARE.

With you, dear boys, I 've lived my boyhood over,
And frisked with you like a twinnéd lamb,
Or if an elder brother, not a better.
But Time speeds on, and in his train Occasion
Dishevels to the wind her golden tress,
Now to be grasped, or forfeit evermore.
The hour sounds for our parting.

THE SCHOLARS.

Parting, Master?

SHAKESPEARE.

Yes, boys, I must to London: part by choice,
Compulsion part: yet be my Ann unchided,
Perchance but instrument of Heaven to urge
My unwilling foot, and spur me on to greatness.
Can keep a secret, boys?

THE SCHOLARS.

Most sacredly.

SHAKESPEARE.

Know then that I have ta'en my fireside fiend,
And decked him out in motley, making him
An antic spirit, and a merry goblin,
And errand have assigned him at stage doors
To knock in likeness of a comedy,
And, winning entrance there, for me he'll win it.
But if he miss, I none the less will follow,
And stand at doors of theatres, and hold horses,
Till one acceding saith, Friend, come up higher.
Yet more, I feel that what my brain affords,
That can my tongue deliver from the boards.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

O master, never a play-actor!

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Sooner
May I learn Latin!

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Ignomy and thou
Be ne'er acquainted!

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Birch us all round rather!

SHAKESPEARE.

'T is true, the actor's name is a derision,
His calling smirched and smutted; and how else
While Tragedy is rant, and Comedy
Through a horse collar grins? But come the Poet
And occupy the stage with men and women
Real as they who come to look upon them;
Or bidden from the realms of phantasy,
Yet true unto the law of their own being;
Or raised from ancient tombs, yet warm with life:
And let each in his various degree
Use an apt parlance that becomes the part:
If prose, the phrase that should have fallen from him,
Being the man he doth but represent:
If metrical his speech, his metre music.
Then, as the bark by mounting tides is lifted,
Needs must the actor rise, sundering the cordage

Which now unto the muddy shore confines him.
And urging blasts of emulation
With his own fellows and his play's creator,
To whom he can disclose things unsurmised
Even by themselves, for art is infinite,
Shall swell his sails and give him to the ocean —
Forgive me, boys, if I do weary you.
From hoarded fuel flashes the young fire;
And, like a wind-stirred tree, my mind casts down
The ripened fruit of meditation.

First Scholar.

I partly apprehend thee, yet would fain
Be told in what recess the Poet lurks
Without whom players must continue clowns.

Shakespeare.

He stands among you.

The Scholars.

Thou?

Shakespeare.

You disbelieve?

First Scholar.

'T is but amazement, master. Had'st thou told us
Thou could'st hold water in a witch's sieve,
We had not blinked, but this is somewhat sudden.
And yet in taking back my memory,
All things that thou hast spoken of the Poet
I do perceive said aptly of thyself.

Shakespeare.

Thy honest witness cheers, for few will credit
That ever Muse came down from Castaly
To rock the cradle of a butcher's son.

Sixth Scholar.

Dear master, did you ever kill a pig?

Shakespeare.

Aye, boy, and thou dost mind me that, when once
A daughter of swart Egypt scanned my palm,
This was the sibyl's rede. Beware of bacon.
Dark speech! which the far future shall unriddle.
Yet trust me, blood hath gushed from nobler veins

To smoke upon my steel. The calf hath found
In me its slayer and its orator
In phrase attuned, for natural to my tongue
Came verse, from sighing wind or rustling leaf
Or murmuring lapse of gentle streams imbibed.
Et quod tentabam dicere, versus erat.
So is it yet. I oft must bite my tongue,
Lest she move laughter, clothing daily chares
In language of immortal poetry.
But see what gift is mine. I do but take
The speech familiar of uncivil men,
And that which had offended in their mouth
In mine is music, losing not at all
The grace of truthful semblance, even as silver
Purged of its dross, is silver all the more.
And though my pen not yet hath laboured much,
No thing it could not render to the life
This narrow spot hath yielded it. My cage,
I 've made a quire, as doth the imprisoned bird,
And sung my bondage freely. But mere music

Discourses, not depicts. I 'd see, not hearken,
And school Imagination's ignorance.
The palace I must view to limn the monarch;
The court, the camp, for courtier and for soldier;
Cities for concourse; marts for merchandise;
The sea for navies, argosies, and tempests;
The bower for ladies' eyes; the hermitage
For old Religion's cord and rosary.
Masques I must know, jousts, triumphs, prisons,
scaffolds,
And him who fattens by usurious ducats,
And him who gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
And whatso else is lacking to my Stratford.
Stratford! I praise thee for thy constables,
For sexton, pedlar, hostler, clown and squire.
But now my soul, no more content with such,
Must seek out spirits liker to itself,
And travel make me happy in the tongues,
Without which I were often miserable.
Wherefore, as oft a dwarf precedes a champion,

A quaint capricious farce, not gross but homely,
Such as may well win laughter from the crowd,
And toleration from the better sort,
I penned, and did despatch to Master Field,
Vendor of books and intimate with players,
My old companion and my now ally.
And it and I and he shall win me London,
And winning London I have won the world.

THE SCHOLARS.

O master, canst thou quit us?

SHAKESPEARE.

Yea, my boys.
'T is better for us all. Our lives have been
In outward things astir, within a slumber.
But now must we arise and get us wisdom,
You studying your book and I the world.
Such the condition Destiny lays on us.
We part, but ever in my breast I bear you,
And, some time in the days to come, my pen

Shall furnish forth the story of our lives
In figure of a martial veteran
Schooling a monarch's valiant progeny
To practise of the chase. This very night,
By heaven! the play shall be rehearsed. Come strike
The deer with me!

FIRST SCHOLAR.

We strike a deer!

SECOND SCHOLAR.

A deer!

THIRD SCHOLAR.

O what is rabbiting to this?

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

'T is heaven
Come down to earth.

SHAKESPEARE.

In sooth 't is pious deed.
"For their great numbers are deemed prejudicial,
And therefore highly disapproved of many."

(So testifies good Master Turbervile.)
To see them at this very season trooping
From wood to field, and stand serenely munching
Young coleworts and green corn, the food of the peasant,
Who fends his crop with clamour, at the most
Daring no missile deadlier than a stone!
Deer! locusts rather! cankers! palmer-worms!
These in their wilderness disquieting,
We but requite their trespass, and do carry
War into Africa. I see you fire
For the adventure, but be wise and wary.
Bright things come quickly to confusion.
Sly Moles, ratcatcher to the house of Lucy,
Came here to egg me on. I much mistrust him.
But now or never 't is. O pitcher, faring
Once more unto the spring, if thou unbroken,
Do yet this time return, farewell deer-stealing!
Now to your homes, where wait the moon's uprise,
And half an hour past curfew steal away.

If any meet you, say you 're rabbiting,
And carry an authenticating ferret.
There, where the slow stream issues from the wood,
Will I encounter you, and, knowing well
Where the stags couch, will lead you to their lairs.
Crossbows and shafts I 'll bring, and he who strikes
The venison first shall be the lord of the feast.

SCENE III. — *The garden of* SHAKESPEARE'S *cottage. Night, the moon behind clouds.*

Enter ANN SHAKESPEARE.

No, Anna, wert thou eyéd as the lynx,
It skilled not to hold vigil in this gloom.
Yet will I bar the exit with my body,
Till Dian aid me, maid celestial —
Hark, there be footsteps, and they draw anigh.
'T is as I deemed, William is stealing forth,
Undoubtedly on some ill errand bound.

SHAKESPEARE [*comes down the path, singing softly*].

A fox went out on a shiny night,
And he asked the moon to lend him light.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

The fox I know, but fain would see the chicken.
Young, tender, toothsome she, I 'll warrant her.

SHAKESPEARE.

Now should I fetch what I have stored away,
But light is none, and none I dare to kindle,
Lest she be on the prowl.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

O holy Dian!
Revealing ray accord, O goddess chaste,
Ere yet his arms another have embraced.

SHAKESPEARE.

O huntress-queen, grant guiding light to see
The treasure I have hid in hollow tree.

DIANA [*invisible*].

The prayers of both are heard.

[*The moon breaks forth.*

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

What! William Shakespeare!
Come to the house this minute, sir; no, stay.
Where is the partner of thy sin?

SHAKESPEARE.

In heaven,
Where my soul flits and hovers in her lustre;
Thither erect thy gaze, and there behold her.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

First, when thou stolest forth she was not shining;
Second, thou might'st have viewed her from the window;
Thirdly, thou art a most perfidious wretch.

SHAKESPEARE.

Who would instruct thee, Anna, why the poet
Solely in free wide air, and face to face,
Worships the chaste and venerable Moon,
Were frustrate of his labour and his time.
But take it for a truth, and know no scene
In spacious Nature's various theatre
Hath like enchantment; whether silver crescent,
Or sphere of glory, or a waning sadness,
She is the bard's adored divinity.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Let her be what she liketh, be she only
Lantern to lead me where thy leman lurks.

SHAKESPEARE.

Search, nought thou 'lt find, came comets down to light thee!

[*While* ANN SHAKESPEARE *searches the garden* SHAKESPEARE *sings.*

Light of thine my prayer desireth,
But, fair Moon, I would it such
As the secret deed requireth,
Not too little, or too much.
Show the deer in covert dim,
But the hunter hide from him.

Call the straying clouds around thee,
Mask thy beam in mist and rain,
Then, when most the gloom hath bound thee,
Shoot thy silver shaft again.
Once the stricken game is mine,
Needest thou no more to shine.

ANN SHAKESPEARE [*returning*].

I could not miss her in this moonshine, were she
Not spirited away by sorcery.

SHAKESPEARE.

Taxest thou me with dealings with the devil?

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Aye, with Sir Belial, he 's lascivious.

SHAKESPEARE.

The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
I should abhor thee, Anna, knew I not
Thy mood the black reflection of thy conscience.
Thou knowest thou hast wronged me, and dost deem
That I am like to pay thee back again.
Thou sawest thyself a sallow rose, with petals
So faded, it were better they were fallen:
Nor refuge could'st thou find in any bosom
Save one, where dwelt what I am bold to call
A gentle spirit, who did bend to soothe

The anguished soul with breathings of soft pity;
Which thou wert ready to mistake for love,
Imagination's fool. I fain would hope so.
For sure it were the office of a fiend
To rob me of my boyish innocence,
Marring the fair intent of kindly Nature,
Blighting the young unbudded rose of love,
And binding on my ignorance a burden
Then illy borne, now insupportable.
Nor way but one see I to loosen it.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Innocent babe! and what of her who rules
The roost at Charlcote?

SHAKESPEARE.

Ye both played for me,
Thou in dire earnest, she as for a counter:
And thou had'st wit to triumph in the game,
But not the wisdom well to ward thy winnings.
Much water since hath flowed 'neath Stratford bridge,

And now the counter shines a gem, more rich
Than coffered hoards of royal treasuries,
Poor to one love throb of a trusting heart.
Anna! if women knew a bosom's wealth!
But fools are they, whose trivial shallow spirits,
Nought giving, nought receive. Weak wanton Cupid
Shall quench his torch for me, and fall to slumber
By a cold valley fountain of the ground,
And I will seek a manly soul, and wear him
In my heart's core, even in my heart of hearts.
And in high verse I will eternise him,
Blazoning his beauty forth, his name concealing
To set the wide world wondering who he was,
And sharp debate shall drain the inky stands
Of sage and scholar labouring to divine
If worth it was of his, or wit of mine.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

William, I know I am a beast of burden,
Yet wiser asses have admonished seers.

This is the old song, sung in Charlcote arbour,
Where, ere I called thee mine, I often heard thee
Discoursing of one Plato with my lady,
And widely stared to hear such clever folks
Propound such flagrant rubbish, till I saw
They strove to cheat each other and themselves.
There is a lizard who draws aliment
From unsubstantial air.

SHAKESPEARE.

What more of him?

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

He holdeth not one colour for an hour:
So is ethereal rapture mutable.
The friend, thy spirit's other moiety
Thou vauntest in anticipation,
Shall fade, and leave a mistress in his place.

SHAKESPEARE.

My heart hath room for him and Poetry,
Close on her ruddy cushion shall they sit,

Both warbling one song, both in one key,
Nor shall another guest inhabit it.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Speaks Poetry thus of thy friend to thee?

SHAKESPEARE.

Aye, woman, that she doth, and adds moreover
What will not win thy thanks. She doth affirm
I shall not find him here in Warwickshire,
And thus enforces me to go and search
Prodigious London. To deal plainly with thee,
Soon will my steps turn thither.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Leaving me
Penurious toil and doles of grudging kindred!
Of this thou reckest nothing, but may'st yet
Think of thy children.

SHAKESPEARE.

Thou dost touch me nearly.
Therein indeed I wander with a wound.

Yet better far that they should lack a sire
Than that the first sound sped to tender ears,
Which nought should taste but honeyed syllables,
Should be the hateful clash of parents' jarring.
So I withdraw me, and await occasion
Of reappearance like the sudden beam
Of heaven's light shed around them. Think not, Anna,
I do abandon thee. The tie of Love
Is ruptured, rather say 't was never knit;
The tie of duty holds. First to myself
And general mankind. If here I loiter
Until my nature, like the dyer's hand
Subdued to that wherein it operates,
Hath caught the trick of chiding; do I weakly
Wrangle away my precious moments, suffer
The spiritual shapes and essences
That else would mingle with my dreams, and foster
My wakeful studies, to be scared from me,
Die I not as the fool? And how wert thou

The better? Be assured, if gain I gather
Diving in London's ocean, thou shalt share it.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

When see I thee again?

SHAKESPEARE.

What time my winnings
Suffice to buy me the best house in Stratford;
With all desirable appendages
Of gardens and commodious outbuildings.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Thou 'rt mad. What fairy's wand or wizard's spell
Will make this moonshine gold?

SHAKESPEARE.

Thyself shall do
With Wit's alliance, cradled now but crescive.
Hate oft discharges offices of love,
And our bad neighbours make us early risers.

The rattle and the rasp of thy shrill tongue,
Thy waspishness and indocility
Have lent me matter for a merry jape,
Wherewith I look to split the groundlings' sides,
Nor much grieve the judicious. This shall pave
My reputation's road.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

How runs its title?

SHAKESPEARE.

The Taming of a Shrew.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Aroint thee, villain!
What! barbarous unmanly reprobate,
Rogue, rascal, viper, vagabond, wretch, base
Slubberdegullion!

SHAKESPEARE.

Never did I hear
Such gallant chiding.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Would'st thou make thy wife,
Defamed already for a scold in Stratford,
Scoff of the town's licentious theatre?

SHAKESPEARE.

Not all deep-bosomed earth's wide fruitfulness
Bought me to traffic with my private wrongs,
And stand my sorrow's showman. Every part
May Shakespeare represent, except his own.
Yet if he hold the mirror up to Nature,
Needs must it image somewhat of himself,
And those who crossed his path to bless or ban.
I studied in thy soul the shrewish temper,
But have not painted thee in painting it.
And further, I have fashioned in my quean
No English daw, but jay of Attica.
And, for thy full assurance, I have feigned her
Contrite and well-conditioned at the last,
Which were not easily believed of thee.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

I credit thee no whit. O I could weep
My spirit from mine eyes! and tear out thine,
But that thou art too tall. But wait an instant,
I will return with that shall make us even.

[*Rushes into the house.* SHAKESPEARE *takes the crossbows from the hollow of a tree and exit. Diana extinguishes the Moon. Re-enter* ANN SHAKESPEARE, *carrying a red-hot iron.*

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

He 's gone, and all is darkness. William! William!
Come back unto my arms, 't is all forgotten.
He will not come again, he 's wisely cautious.
Yet scatheless should he be, my heart is melting,
My wrath cools with the iron in my hand.

[*Throws it away.*

I marvel not he thinks that I have wronged him,
And yet I am, I trust, a pious woman,

Whom grief at his unbridled levities
And seeming genial-venial faults, beguiled,
With full approof and warranty of conscience,
To deem that I trepanned him for his good.
But easier far to capture than to cage
This winged elf, this wight of quicksilver,
Not by thee, Anna, to be stayed or moulded,
Unless at disadvantage he be caught.
Matter it were for laud and thankfulness
If he did break his leg, or anything
Short of his neck, thus of discourse of reason
Made auditor. O that I had him fast,
With six comedians or more, his tribe,
To use my lawful tongue! With holy prayers
And wholesome syrups, drugs, and catapotions,
Soon would I make a formal man of him.
But strong is he as packhorse, sound as roach.
O better had I tended apes in hell!
O wit too wily! O cards played too well!

[*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*The Scholars awaiting* SHAKESPEARE *by the side of a wood. Fitful moonlight.*

FIRST SCHOLAR.

Our master tarrieth long. Unless he come,
Scarce shall we compass deed of noble note.

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Without his cheering comradeship and counsel
The lions in our path roar horribly.

SIXTH SCHOLAR.

O are there any lions in the wood?

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Our master spoke no word of any such.
Of foxes hath he told, stoats, otters, badgers,
Wild cats and martens, urchins, foumarts, weasels,
But ne'er of lions.

FOURTH SCHOLAR.

Or of wolves.

FIFTH SCHOLAR.

Or bears.

FIRST SCHOLAR.

I look not to meet such, but 't is most certain
Goblins there are from whose unhallowed dens
The foot beguiled ne'er cometh forth again;
And elves that dance the traveller to death,
If heedless he transgress their fairy rings;
And shrieks of hags invisible, that freeze
The curdled blood to immobility.

SECOND SCHOLAR.

Night ravens too, and hell-hounds.

THIRD SCHOLAR.

Shrouded shapes
Of wicked ghosts. But it is wondrous comfort
These but the midnight hour unsepulchres,
And at the crow of cock they flee away.

First Scholar.

Welcome our master and the moon together!

Enter Shakespeare, *carrying crossbows and a lantern, which he extinguishes.*

Shakespeare.

Out, out, brief candle!

First Scholar.

We have waited, Master.

Shakespeare.

Aye, boys, I lingered, by this lantern tracking
A slot that shall conduct us to the deer.
Now the free wind has blown the rain away,
And swept the clouds from the serene of heaven,
We well may glimpse it, there it is, behold!

[*Distributes the bows.*

'T is the long slot, which, rather than the round,
Doth the hart's bigness argue. Come we now
Beneath these jagged boughs, which though not yet

The leaf hath clothed them, hinder much the moon
From spilling silver on the mossy earth,
Now stealthy ! stealthy !

[*They move on cautiously.*

Sad it is we lack
The fond and faithful hound. O that my palm
Were tickling his cold nose with vinegar,
Which sniffing, he should scent invigorate.
But breeding him I bred suspicion.

First Scholar.

Ourselves must hunters be and hunting-dogs.

Shakespeare.

Aye, wanting all pride, pomp and circumstance
Of glorious hunting ; horse and horn and hound,
And flying stag, and toils that tangle him.
Talk in low tones, and use we well the time
When, in long duel of the light and shade,
Moonlight hath for a while the mastery.
And soon, I ween, we come upon the stag
Hid in some holt of holm, or where the spray

Of thorn gleams whitely in the van of spring.
'T is now, as she doth loose the hard-bound earth,
The stag perceives the loosening of his horns,
And seeks the forest's privacy, to shed
The branching load, and hide him in the brake,
Secretly, sole companion to himself,
Until his antlered pride be grown again.
Pray heaven he harbour not in the high wood,
Whence scarcely hounds shall drive him, much less we.
But if, in coppice couched, we find him soon.
The fewter vouches him not far away.

First Scholar.

But grant him smit to death, how bear we off
The carcase?

Shakespeare.

Close at hand a narrow stream,
Or call it trench, creeps by, sluggish and dark,
And macerating yet the drifted leaf.
This rippling with faint stir rocks languidly
A punt with iron chain, which we unhook

And pole along till presently we reach
A charcoal-burner's cot, our good ally:
There for a season we bestow the spoil.
Silent and cautious must our voyage be,
For at the forest's issue is no choice
But entrance into light. Thus in life's chases
The shadowed ways of crafty policy
Heaven's beam doth on the sudden give to sight,
And the sly hunter on another's ground
Becomes himself the hunted.

[MOLES *suddenly appears with the* FORESTERS.

MOLES.

Comprehend them!

[THE FORESTERS *rush forward and seize* SHAKESPEARE *and* THE SCHOLARS.

SHAKESPEARE.

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough.

[*The curtain falls.*

ACT II

SCENE I.—*The Street before the Court House at Stratford. In the background the* PUBLIC, *awaiting admission. In the foreground* FIVE FATHERS *and a* MOTHER, *conferring with the* CLERK OF THE COURT.

FIRST FATHER.

Must we then howl jointly and severally, good Master Clerk?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Aye, Master Perch, and roar also.

SECOND FATHER.

And weep exceeding sore?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Aye, so as thy neighbour smelleth not thine onion.

THIRD FATHER.

And when shall this our lamentation and uproar appear most prudent and seemly, good Master Clerk?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

When ye shall note Sir Thomas to enter. Until then, lift not your voices clamorously: only thou [*to the Mother*] may'st sob and spare not. Notwithstanding, omit not the while to shake your fists at Master Shakespeare. And remember that when Sir Thomas cometh in, ye men shall cry for justice against the said Shakespeare, but the mother shall cry only, "O my boy, my boy! my innocent boy!"

FOURTH FATHER.

Wherefore this, good Master Clerk?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Marry, because Sir Thomas maliceth Shakespeare, and shall regard you the more favourably if you do him to wit that you malice Shakespeare also, and give him cause to say that Shakespeare has hurt not him only but you and your children. Cry and weep inasmuch as it shall be given you, until ye perceive Sir Thomas offer to speak, or call the first witness, then

may a pin be heard to fall; and have a special care that none be able to say that Sir Thomas taketh his law from the fathers of the defendants.

FIFTH FATHER.

May we not cry from time to time, "O Sir Thomas, Sir Thomas, spare my child!" as though extremity of anguish did enforce us?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Aye, but warily, that Sir Thomas his voice be not covered thereby.

FIRST FATHER.

There is but one thing yet somewhat disquieteth me, good Master Clerk.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

What of it?

FIRST FATHER.

Thou knowest that our children do marvellously affect their master Shakespeare, and I doubt that

when they see us shake our fists at him, they will shake their fists at us.

SECOND FATHER.

Aye, and that when we cry out against him they will cry for him, and call him dear master.

THIRD FATHER.

And say that they choose rather imprisonment with him, and their love and loyalty shall move many.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

It moveth not Sir Thomas, I warrant you, albeit he be of gentle heart save when he maliceth a man, and he maliceth your sons not at all, but Shakespeare only. But see, the doors are opened, and the folk enter. Go in, therefore, and sit where I did tell you: and although your sons must needs be shent in court, doubt not that this night they shall eat their porridge at home.

[*They go in.*

SCENE II.—SIR THOMAS LUCY'S *private room in the Court House.*

SIR THOMAS LUCY [*laying down a paper*].

Now am I perfect, now can so direct
The steps, bewildered else, of sightless Justice.
No stay, or slip, or stumble need she fear.
How well it doth become the magistrate
To bench him squarely with a mind made up
Ere he hath heard a word about the case
In public session, nailed to his opinion,
Like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved!
Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.
Majestic proclamation! Held this not,
The pillared firmament were rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But it holdeth.
My foe is at my feet, there shall he lie,
Though all the angels swore his alibi.

[*A knocking at the door.*

Tap! tap! tap! tap! What! summoned forth already
To the judicial seat! In! menial!

Enter LADY LUCY.

LADY LUCY.

Sir Thomas, have you thought about the sentence?
I know you wont to carry your awards
To Court all cut and dried, like wholesome blisters,
Ready for instant application.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

My mind is labouring towards this very point,
And 'twixt the blandishments of heavy whipping
And long imprisonment hangs balancing:
Whiche'er it be, he takes a turn at the pillory,
In lieu of fine our clemency remits,
Knowing that *nullos habet reditus*.

LADY LUCY.

Whip not, Sir Thomas, nor imprison him,
But send to other counties fugitive.

There let him to the greenwood go alone
A banished man.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Would'st thou be nut-brown maid?
You greatly wrong your reputation
Suing for one against whom, were you honest,
It rather should become you to inflame me.
'T is not so much resentment at his trespass
Who leapt the pale that held my lovely deer,
But dispeace of mine own I am expelling,
And slur on you that I am wiping off,
That load my sentence with severity.
Or you, or I, should be inexorable.
If you are slandered, I avenge your honour;
But, are you spotted, vindicate my own.

LADY LUCY.

Slandered I am, Sir Thomas, this believe,
But dread lest slander truth become, unless
My suasion moves. Would'st make me pity Shakespeare?

Thou ne'er had'st deemed him poacher, but for me.
Shall I not hate myself if savage stripes
Deface a youth so gentle? must I not
Make show of my compassion and remorse?
And will these press no further? Tempt not thou.
If long he linger pent in noisome gaol,
Sure penitential thought shall lodge with him,
And to his plaints my fancies shall be ears;
Comforts shall I procure, and anodynes,
Which tokens shall become, and haply hence
May grow to embassies and stratagems.
O put not wantonly my faith in peril!
Banish the man upon condition
Of sharpest penalty be he again
In Warwickshire beheld, and with one stroke
Of policy disarm all jeopardies.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Lady, I see thou lovest him, and fearest;
This angers me and moves me to deny thee

What thing soever thou solicitest.
But, on the other hand, thou reasonest well.
My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirred,
And I myself see not the bottom of it.

Enter an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

Sir Thomas, Mistress Shakespeare craves admittance.

LADY LUCY.

Deny her, good Sir Thomas.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

May she not
Bring light to our perplexities?
[*To* ATTENDANT.
Admit her.

Enter ANN SHAKESPEARE.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

My reverence to your honour and my Lady!

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Mistress, if pardon for thy spouse entreating,
Thine errand know for vain, and spare to vex
Our ears with idle importunity.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Not such is my petition, noble Sir.
Long have I groaned o'er William's evil courses,
And mourned to know my household fed by rapine,
And mine own stomach's pure integrity
Polluted by his depredations.
How oft when spit hath turned, or caldron bubbled,
Mid savoury smells and steams have I with voice
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman,
Demanded, William, whence this venison?
And he would laugh, and cite some silly tale
Of Theseus or the ghost of Herne the Hunter.
Pardon I pray not then, but penalty
Conducive to his reformation;
Like lightning, sanctifying where it strikes.

And in my poor conceit, the lash, applied
By loving spirits wielding arms of flesh,
Best scared this poaching devil out of him.

LADY LUCY.

Sure in thy cradle thou did'st sup the milk
That Romulus and Remus throve upon.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Or else wert nurtured in Hyrcania.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Under your graces' favour, I am neither
My seeming or your deeming. Wis ye not
Sharp stripes, his portion, but a mockery
To my invisible hurts and viewless wounds?
Which well I now may bear, since at my side
Sudden occasion shines a radiant angel,
Armed with the lictor's rod that shall redeem him,
Raised with the lark to sing at heaven's gate.
O base to set his flesh above his spirit!
But 't is time's veriest nick. A prosperous star

Surmounts my zenith now, whose influence, if
I court not but omit, eftsoons my William
Droops in a noose ; and other fates and fortunes,
With his unseverably braced and morticed,
Turn round with it as spokes turn with the wheel.
Am I to take no thought for our poor children?
What shall these eat if father goes to gaol?

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Thou hast a tribe of brethren.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Who flung
My innocence

LADY LUCY [*aside*].

O most mendacious minx!

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

With willing sport to the wild ocean
Of stormful wedlock, in their sister's person
Themselves relieving of unwelcome load,
And tying her to Shakespeare, sink or swim.

O scorpion progeny! of whom no more,
Lest I betray me to mine own reproof.
Beseech you then of your great charity
Suffer the sinner's weal to overpoise
The burdened scale of his transgressions,
Using such nice adjustment of the lash
As but a week may bind him to his bed,
Where he may call Repentance to efface
The long score he hath run up with the Fiend,
And be his own inquisitor, things past
Summoning to sessions of sweet silent thought,
Save when I moralise the spectacle.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Wilt thou procure a surgeon at thy charge
To salve his wounds?

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

These peril not his days,
Being hurts of hide of cow, not horn of hart;
Yea rather windows in his corporal ark

For banished raven and returning dove.
For I will be his ministering angel,
To every groan responsive with a tear.
Salad and leek and cress I 'll bring; nor gruel
Nor broth nor porridge scant; nor, be they needful,
Strange panaceas in a crystal bowl;
Mummy, and mandrake, Venice's famed treacle
(Whereof the asp is chief ingredient)
And choicest wormwood by myself distilled;
And cease not to upbraid him for his sins,
Save when I read him from some godly tome
The homilies of painful ministers:
Or, stilling objurgation, usher in
Reason with glass of Truth equipped to show him
The ass he hath enacted; or enlarge
On that great plucking forth of burning brands,
The wide dispersion of his hopeful scholars,
Who now shall 'scape the gallows, we may trust:
And how he needs must come to beggary,
Unless your honour, of your condescension,

Do give him some small place. Such discipline,
Chasing afar vain love and poetry,
Shall tame his spirit, and by slow degrees
Subdue him to the useful and the good.
O Lady Lucy, be my orator.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Mistress, Egeria revives in thee.
But know, our Lady hath already opened
Her mind to us, alleging weighty cause
Why thy unhappy husband, being so spotted,
Should not be striped to boot, but eat the bread
Of exile, far from pleasant Warwickshire.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

The Lady Lucy speaks not from her faith,
But from her need.

LADY LUCY.

I took thought for thy husband,
Of thy most base desertion prescient.
Thou rotten rib! most perfect fruit of Sodom,
If only thy exterior enticed!

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

'T is thou would'st lure him on the road to Sodom,
And I who Zionward would set his face.
And am I nothing? and the helpless children?

LADY LUCY.

See thou to that. I not abase my thought
To thee and to thy brats.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

If brats of Shakespeare's,
'T is marvel, lady, that they are not yours.

LADY LUCY.

Sir Thomas, will you hear me thus insulted?

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Sir Thomas, weigh the provocation. Brats!!
The blessed babes!

LADY LUCY.

The ugly little monsters!

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Lady, say that again, and I will claw you.

LADY LUCY.

Sir Thomas, will you shield me from this fury?

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Peace, peace, I pray you peace.

Enter an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

The Court, Sir Thomas,
Expects its magistrate.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

There shines a rainbow!
Come, follow soberly, the pair of you.

[*Aside.*

Rough is the day, but we will rough it through.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Interior of the Court House, filled by the* PUBLIC. SIR THOMAS LUCY *on the bench,* LADY LUCY *and* ANN SHAKESPEARE *near him.* SHAKESPEARE *standing in the dock, handcuffed. The* SCHOLARS *sitting together outside the dock. The* FATHERS *and* MOTHER *opposite.* CLERK OF THE COURT, CONSTABLE, ATTENDANTS, *and* USHERS. MOLES *leaving the witness-box.*

FIRST FATHER.

[*Aside to the Clerk of the Court.*

Master, was this well howled?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Most wolfishly.

THE MOTHER.

How was the weeping?

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Very laudable.

So Niobe bewept herself to stone,
And Thisbe wailed by Ninny's monument.
Now silent sit and hopefully expect
The glad enlargement of your erring sons.

THE CONSTABLE.

Hush! hush! Sir Thomas rises.

THE CLERK OF THE COURT.

Hush!

THE ATTENDANTS AND USHERS.

Hush!

THE PUBLIC.

Hush!

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Friends and admirers, burgesses of Stratford!
So crammed the Court is with particulars,
More to adduce were superfluity.
Thou chiefly, Moles, another Androclus,

Hast plucked the prickle from the lion's paw,
And limping Justice bounds and roars again.
The Court knows what it knows, and what it knows not
It knows is immaterial to be known.
Yet of our equity, though but for form's sake,
We 'll hear what the defendant has to say,
And if his speech do aggravate his guilt,
Will mark the advantage. Come, thou serpent, if
Thou hast justification, hiss it forth!

SHAKESPEARE.

Sir Thomas, I plead guilty.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Hast thou aught
Meet to be urged in mitigation?

SHAKESPEARE.

Much, would the magistrate so deem it, but
'T were faggot to the furnace of his wrath.

LADY LUCY.

Take heed, then, heat not thou the furnace sevenfold.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

William, be ruled, petition for a whipping.

SHAKESPEARE.

I thank your Ladyship for your good counsel,
Which Prudence bids me hearken, yet should Truth
Upbraid me, did I miss the rare occasion
To bring her and Sir Thomas face to face
For confirmation of their crescive love.
She bids me say, Sir Thomas, that yourself
Create the fault you would chastise in me,
And keep yourself a poacher's school, your scholars
Men goaded into wrong by righteous anger
At small oppressions, petty grievances,
Affronts, contumelies, scarce perceived by him
Who gives, to him who takes esil and wormwood.
These spring, I know, from no embosomed malice,
But thoughtlessness and heady vanity,

And pride so swollen that his pursed-up eyes
Perceive not that the peasant is a man, —
Praise him, he beams content; prick him, he bleeds;
Feed him, he guards your substance; starved, he steals it.
Deem you that I had robbed you of your deer
If you had taken nought from me and mine?
Wrongful the deed, I own, worse the example.
'T is said, the world subsists by thievery.
The sun 's an arrant spoiler of the ocean,
The moon conveys her pallid fire from him,
And earth and water plunder one another.
But you, Sir Thomas, rob both earth and water,
And would the sun and moon too, could you grasp them.
How many commons have you not devoured?
What paths not barred? where erst the villager
Was used to trip, but now slinks sullen, conscious
Both of his trespass and your injury,
And all for your game's sake. Far worse I deem it

That vices not your own, but by you planted,
Do eat into our honest English nature.
For frankness roguery, for truth evasion,
For pleasure in his lord's prosperity
Envy and grudge, for honourable dealing
A settled purpose by sly practices
The scale unfairly weighted to adjust,
The fiend expelling by another fiend.
These cankers prey upon our England's blood,
Pray Heaven they bring not palsy. Would'st thou hearken
My friendly suasion, some kind passages,
Some acres of filched common given back,
Some paths unstopped, a courteous mien, the pressure
Of hand by toil made honourably rough,
Some gifts dispersed as duty, not as dole,
Some genial largesse from thy parks and warrens,
Some boons to recompense the ravaged crops,
Some mingling with the people's sports and pastimes,
And on the seat of justice, should'st thou strain

The letter of the law at all, indulgence —
Trust me, Sir Thomas, such slight condescensions
Would make thee, in thy sphere, as England's Queen,
Whose throne is builded on her people's hearts.
Now, did I tell this populace I took
Thy deer for public cause, they would acclaim me,
Shakespeare, the Robin Hood of Warwickshire.
I shall not tell them, 't were but half the truth.
I am the people's poet, not their tribune.
Sport pointed me the way with beechen spear,
And Youth, too young to know what conscience is.
This is the head and front of my offending,
And fault it is that Time is ever mending.
No exculpation plead I for my crime,
Save the most brisk and giddy-paced time
Of this my twentieth year, and overplus
Of spirit frolicsome and venturous,
And sick and sorry heart that bade me roam
To shun the hell of an unquiet home,
And love of the wild creatures in their lairs,

And joy to match my wiliness with theirs;
And if these pleas avail not, here I stand
Ready to take my sentence at thy hand:
But not upon my boys thy vengeance wreak,
Branding them miscreants for a youthful freak.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

A goodly speech, well studied and well spoken;
Be sure it shall avail to shape thy sentence.

LADY LUCY [*aside*].

Alas! his bosom swells with pent-up fury.
It tears him as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

ANN SHAKESPEARE [*aside*].

If he deliver sentence in this fluster
I 'll have to nurse my William for a month:
Which for his blessing overrule, kind Heaven.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Not much this cause demands of subtlety;
It needeth but discrimination.

To lack which were impossibility
For me, by edict of forecasting Heaven
Ordained to be a county magistrate.
But when the judge accedes to passing sentence
Light doth he need, and to be done to wit
Touching the wretched culprit at the bar,
His dispositions and his antecedents,
And who should know them better than his wife?
Stand forth, Ann Shakespeare.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

At your honour's bidding.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Speak to thy husband's character.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Great Sir,
A good youth were he, were he not a poet,
And were we not too nearly of an age,
As to the Court is plainly visible.

LADY LUCY [*aside*].

O brazen hussey!

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Had I caught him younger,
Much had I made of him, much yet will make,
Will you by my persuasion rule your doom,
And yoke Law's lion with my lamb of love.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

What chastisement deem'st thou most meet for him?

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

The lash, grave Sir, but with such love and wisdom
Attempered, that it smite nor less nor more
Than needful for his subjugation
To his much injured and most loving wife,
But lay him gently on a restful couch
For profitable hours of penitence,
And colloquy with me, continuous tasting
The medicated honey of my speech
Like time, as half renews the dwindled moon,

Replenishing her lamp with chilly fire.
But do not, with mistaking kindness, fix
The thirsty leech on his poor family.
I will attend him, for he is my husband;
Diet his sickness, for it is my office;
And will have no attorney but myself.

LADY LUCY.

O good Sir Thomas, send the man a-packing,
And be we rid and quit of him, and bar
The gate of his return with penalty.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Dames, to your service I am held and bounden,
Not as mere judge, but by devoir of knighthood
Therein most happy, may I stead you both.

[*To the* PUBLIC.

The Court hath listened to these ladies, urging
One exile, one the scourge. Ere they had spoken,
I leaned to neither, but imprisonment.
But rapt audition of their eloquence

Hath shocked my purpose, and myself I liken
To Dardan Paris when the heavenly three
Sought the Idæan mountain all unrobed,
Contending for the apple. Could the shepherd
Have shared it among all, what ravages
Of devastation he had spared the world!
Trojaque nunc stares, Priamique arx alta maneres.
What Paris might not do, Sir Thomas may:
And being, like him, confronted with the charms
Of three most beauteous competitors,
Banishment, flagellation, durance vile,
And not, like him, corrupted with a bribe,
Or violently in my proper person
Enamoured of their most divine embraces,
I do award the apple unto all.
That is to say, Shakespeare shall first be whipped,
Imprisoned then till healed, then for three years
Exiled to distant shires, there to propound,
With carriage apt and speech mellifluous,
Strange doctrines unto country gentlemen.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Shall I have license to attend my lord,
And piteously beweep his horrid scars,
And soothe with opiates and leniments,
And reprehend him for his sinfulness,
And read him printed piety, and touch
His spirit to fine issues? Intercede,
I supplicate your Ladyship.

SHAKESPEARE.

Alas
For blind Authority beating with his staff
The child that would have led him! Thou, Sir Thomas,
Thinking to shame me in thy lady's sight,
Sham'st but thyself in mine. Thou may'st not touch
My spirit that can suffer and be strong.

LADY LUCY.

I doubt Sir Thomas sleeps not well to-night.
My tongue is shorter than thy Anna's, William,
By a good yard, but yet methinks 't will serve.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Relieve our presence of the knave's pollution.

THE CONSTABLE.

Sir Thomas, I 'm afeard to touch the man.
Thou heardest? he hath a familiar spirit,
Perchance an impish sootikin, but haply
Tail-switching Lucifer, Hell's emperor.

SHAKESPEARE.

Aye, man, I hold in fee ten thousand spirits,
And more can summon from the vasty deep,
Who at my word shall seize thy knight and thee,
And set bemocked upon the public stage,
Stuff for the humorous world's derision.

THE CONSTABLE.

What did I tell your honour?

THE PUBLIC [*from the lower end of the Court*].

Place! give place!
A messenger from her dread Majesty!

Enter LEICESTER, *muffled in a horseman's cloak, much splashed.*

LADY LUCY.

Bespattered is he all from head to foot.
Urgent must be his errand.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

To foul treason,
Belike, it hath respect, or Papistry.

THE CONSTABLE [*aside*].

I 'll free me of the Pope and Devil together,
Getting me from the Court.

[*Exit hastily.*

SIR THOMAS LUCY *to* LEICESTER.

Our loves and duties,
Like greyhounds straining in the leashes, fret
To know the cause of thy commanded speed,
That the effect may follow.

LEICESTER.

I have charge
To claim the body of one William Shakespeare.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Shakespeare! Hath rumour of the man's malfeasance
Reached then the royal ear? deems our liege Lady
Whipping too good for him? If so, our sentence
Admits recast.

LEICESTER.

Thou grossly errest, Lucy.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Lucy! Thou Lucyest me! Knave malapert!
But for her state and grandeur who hath sent thee
(Most unadvisedly, if it be lawful
In aught her Grace's prudence to impeach),
I would commit thee.

LEICESTER.

Lucy, thou art blind.
Can mere disguisement of a horseman's cloak,
And travel-stains conceal the Lord of Leicester?

[*Throws off the cloak and appears dressed in a rich suit.*

THE PUBLIC.

Leicester! The Earl!

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

O good my lord —

LEICESTER.

Sir Thomas,

Conceive all said on thy part and on mine.

Time rushes on, upsetting Compliment.

Excuse be hushed, and my commission speeded

By sight of William Shakespeare.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

There he stands

Manacled in the dock.

LEICESTER.

What his offence?

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Heading a band of youthful desperadoes,

He burst the barrier of my parked domain,

Designing my deer's death, and if unhindered
By vassals' vigilance, had questionless
Broken my lodge and kissed my keeper's daughter.

LEICESTER.

Thy deer, thou sayest, he slew but in intention,
And thou hast in intention punished him.
I deem you quits. Now hearken my award.
Know all, I, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester,
Knight of the Garter, Privy Counsellor,
General, Lord Lieutenant of the county,
Having well weighed the case of William Shakespeare,
And of his six alleged accomplices,
The doom of the inferior magistrate [*Aside.*
(Not knowing and not caring what it was),
Do quash, annul, and make of none effect,
As also the indictment, and all process
Past, present, or to come. [*Applause in Court.*] His manacles
Unrivet, and provide him with a horse,

For with him I must hie to Kenilworth,
To London then, where princely grace awaits him.

[*The* PUBLIC *throng around* SHAKESPEARE, *vieing in taking off his manacles. The* FATHERS *and the* MOTHER *caress their sons, who receive them unfilially.*

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Are things turned inside out? or upside down?
Or doth the earth, from Atlas' shoulder slipt,
Tumble amain unto destruction?
The beam of royal favour gild his brow
Who would have antlered mine! whose felon hands
Are ruddy with the blood of my fat bucks!

LEICESTER.

The beam of royal grace, Sir Thomas Lucy,
Alighteth where it will, and willeth oft
Light, where eclipse were fitter. Yet, methinks,
It hath not this time lit upon a dunghill,
But on the goodliest man in *thy* court, whom

Authentic signatures of Jove and Venus
Do so commend, he greatly overlooks
Thy little brief authority. No wonder
He claimed the freedom of thy park.

[*To* SHAKESPEARE.

This argues
A generous strain in thee, and lordly instincts.
Deer-killing came in with the Conqueror.
Hast any record of thy lineage?

SHAKESPEARE.

An ancestor of mine, so please your Lordship,
In our third Henry's reign, was high exalted. [*Aside.*
Upon the gallows.

LEICESTER.

Like lot shall be thine.

SHAKESPEARE [*aside*].

The Lord forbid!

LEICESTER.

If thou do justify
Opinion by her Majesty conceived

Of thy facetious wit and parts. She hath heard
A little toy of thine, a comedy
('T is called, I think, The Taming of a Shrew)
Read by a maid of honour, thereunto
Moved, as I gather, by one Master Field,
Late of this town, who further doth attest
Actor with bard met happily in thee.
Nought now will serve but thou must post to Court.
This charge is mine, which I, the more to blazon
My zeal, and haply countermine the workings
Of burrowing Intrigue, my credit sapping,
Perform in person. Take immediate leave
Of mates and kindred, and away with me.

SHAKESPEARE.

Sir Thomas, I will stand your friend at Court:
On two conditions, one that presently
You do unclose the path you stopped last Christmas:
Next, that although the noble Earl of Leicester
Your sentence doth annul, yet, by his favour,

Two parts revoked, you amplify the third,
And banish me from Stratford for ten years.

LEICESTER.

What moveth thee to this?

SHAKESPEARE.

My Lady Lucy
Surmiseth shrewdly, so doth Mistress Shakespeare.
And I myself would set division
Between my past and future, signifying
The new life to be led. Too long I 've lingered
In my dark morning hours, but, now the sun
Of regal favour rises on my path,
Needs must I follow this to glorious noonday,
And then, unto my native place reverting,
Which ne'er was aught but dear to me, or shall be,
There slowly through the golden hours declining,
Will set in splendour, like the westering sun,
But, unlike him, in the same zone and region
Where origin I had.

LEICESTER.

'T is nobly spoken,
And know the Earl of Leicester for thy friend
Not less than her great Majesty, and able
To ope yet wider worlds to thee. The quarrel
'Twixt Spain and England draweth to a head,
And soon the world shall ring with it, and then
The Hollander and we in union vanquish,
Or separate perish. This we know, and soon
The verdant level and the slow canal
Shall bristle with our pikes, throb with our drums,
Stream with our banners, and reverberate
The thunder of our cannon. I shall fill
The regent's seat, and my imperious truncheon
Shall beck thee to my retinue, to gather
Stuff for thy art by practice of the world.
What various shapes shall crowd the tented field!
Soldier and sutler, merchant, peasant, spy;
Captains courageous, English amazons,
Whom deaths of lovers slain most treacherously

Impel to hurl the Dons to Devildom;
Dicer and cut-purse, page, groom, beggar, minstrel;
Courtesans, fortune-tellers, desperadoes;
Armourers and devisers of strange engines;
And knights too corpulent to fight or fly.
And other matter shalt thou find, arrays
Of marching hosts, pent cities, trenched leaguers,
Sallies, alarms, encounters, skirmishes,
Duels and deaths, and, chief of all, examples
Most noble, in whose brightness thou may'st sit,
And as an eagle preen thee in the sun,
Purging all soilure haply gathered here;
For know, my nephew Sidney tends my person,
Mirror of courtesy and chivalry.

SHAKESPEARE.

My Lord, the grace and bounty of your Lordship
Leave me so rapt, I scarce find breath and boldness
For one petition, 't is most necessary.

LEICESTER.

Say on.

SHAKESPEARE.

I humbly crave that, their breadwinner
Absent by Majesty's command, my wife
And tender infants lack not sustenance.

LEICESTER.

Be this thy care, Sir Thomas, and bestow
Rather excess than insufficiency.

SIR THOMAS LUCY.

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
This vixen quean, this dam of demi-bastards,
Bedrenched like Danae with golden showers
Whose drops distil from mine own treasury!

LEICESTER.

Tush, Lucy, thou must be conformable,
Or else abide her Grace's high displeasure.
Thy lady, prone to offices of love,
Shall seek the spouse forlorn, and soothe her sadness,
Making a sunshine in the shady place.

ANN SHAKESPEARE [*aside*].

How best to bar my doorway?

LADY LUCY [*aside*].

I will tell her

Rare passages of gallantry at Court.

THE SCHOLARS.

Huzza! our master fares to Court addrest.

SHAKESPEARE.

Bearing his boys for ever in his breast.

FIRST FATHER.

Good Master Shakespeare, there is no unkindness?

SHAKESPEARE.

No, not a grain. Myself should crave excuse.
But the high ardour of your mettled sons
To race the roads of learning, did demand
Curb, more than spur.

THE MOTHER.

I ever knew my boy

A prodigy.

THE FATHERS.

And so say all of us.

SHAKESPEARE.

Well, Anna, shall we change a word together?

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!

SHAKESPEARE.

Deem'st thou I know not this? Wer 't otherwise,
Stratford and I had long ago been strangers.
My good thou did'st intend, and had'st effected,
Had'st thou not been, — but better 't were to spare thee
Thy faults' unlovely catalogue. Now listen.
I am steeled 'gainst wrath and hate, and Heaven forefend
The one offence for ever unforgiven.
If thou envenomest my childrens' bosoms
'Gainst me unseen, with crimes imaginary
Slurring my name, with a depicted devil

Scaring the innocent eye that should have seen
The Father's image in the earthly parent,
Then, and then only, take my malison.

ANN SHAKESPEARE.

Of this nought apprehend.

SHAKESPEARE.

'T is passing well.

[*Kisses her.*

Fix thou thy appetence on things supernal;
Guide our fair children in the paths of virtue;
Cherish the harmless necessary cat,
Who will for my departure wring her hands;
Speak of me sometimes, rail at me but seldom;
So for ten years farewell.

[*An* ATTENDANT *enters and whispers* LEICESTER.

LEICESTER.

To horse! to horse!

[*Exit with* SHAKESPEARE. *The curtain falls.*

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